

FOUR UNCLES A WEDDING

by Emma Carlyle
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IN THE BEGINNING: Emancipation Proclamation

“This isn’t working anymore.” I spoke to the ceiling, my voice controlled and emotionless. Significant Other groaned but didn’t turn over. He spoke to the closet. “Women don’t always come. You know that. Go to sleep.”

Easy for him to say. Some men hold records for the two-minute mile. Significant Other beats them by a full minute and does it lying down. Slam. Bam. He didn’t even bother with the thank-you, ma’am, anymore. I felt more like a sperm repository than a girlfriend. I flung back the quilt and switched on the overhead fixture. The room filled with bright light, too glaring for the late hour.

“Hey, come on, Polly! I’ve got a big meeting tomorrow. I need to get some sleep.”

“Fine.” Leaving the light on, I stalked into the kitchen and rummaged through the cabinets until I found a box of heavy-duty trash bags. When I returned to the bedroom, he had turned the light off. I flipped it back on.

“What the hell are you doing?”

“You’re leaving.” I yanked open a dresser drawer and dumped the contents into one of the plastic bags. “Go sleep at the Waldorf.”

“Are you crazy?” He jumped out of bed and grabbed the half-filled bag from my hand. “It’s nearly midnight.”

“Then you’d better hurry if you want your beauty sleep.” I grabbed an armload of pinstripes, blue blazers, and khakis from his half of the closet and stuffed them, hangers and all, into another bag. The plastic split down the seam along one side. I didn’t care. I tossed the bag at him. “I want you and your selfish ego out of my apartment. Now.”

He stared at me, his eyes wide, his jaw hanging down like a broken hinge. “You’re kicking me out in the middle of the night because you didn’t have an orgasm? That’s crazy!”

“No.” I fought to keep my voice from rising along with my growing anger. I didn’t want to sound hysterical. “Crazy is molding my life around your needs and completely denying my own. No orgasm sex is merely the tip of the iceberg. This is the first sane thing I’ve done in six months.”

He pulled a hanger from the bag, ripping the plastic further. “I was going to ask you to marry me.” His speech took on that pathetic, passive-aggressive little-boy sound he slipped into when things weren’t going his way.

“I don’t want to marry you. I don’t love you.” Actually, I suddenly realized I didn’t even like Significant Other, but I didn’t tell him that. I’m not a cruel person.

“Of course you do, Polly. You’re just angry right now. Let’s go back to bed, and we’ll talk this over tomorrow after work.”

I raised my arm and pointed to the door. “Out!”

* * *

“We never liked him,” said my mother and father in unison.

“I knew you’d come to your senses,” said Uncle Aaron.

“Just needed to get it out of your system,” said Uncle Francis.

“Atta girl!” said Uncle Emerson.

“About time,” said Uncle Cal.

* * *

And that’s when the real trouble began. Don’t get me wrong. I love my parents and my great-uncles, but in their own way they can be as manipulative as Significant Other had been -- only far less subtle. The weekend after my self-proclaimed Emancipation Proclamation the six of them embarked on an all out campaign to cheat time and beat my biological clock. And like any loving relatives on a mission, they fought dirty.

Top 10 Reasons to Call it Quits After the First Date

10. He’s thirty-five and still living with his mother.
9. He shows up for a formal gala at the Met wearing black jeans and a tuxedo print T-shirt.
8. He shows up for a picnic in Central Park wearing a three-piece Brooks Brothers suit, white shirt with French cuffs, and a conservative blue and red striped tie.
7. He kisses with his eyes open and puckers his lips like a fish sucking up plankton.
6. He has a list of his former girlfriends tattooed on his left bicep.
5. He spends the entire date talking about his ex-girlfriend.
4. He spends the entire date psychoanalyzing you.
3. He brings his own silverware to the restaurant and disinfects all surfaces with anti-bacterial wipes before touching anything.
2. He conveniently forgets to mention he’s married.

And the number one reason to call it quits after the first date --

1. Your parents or one of your great-uncles fixes you up with him (which means he most likely falls into one of the above categories.)